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UNCLAS ROME 005897

SIPDIS

FOR IIP/G/EUR CSIEMONH; IIP/G RCROSS-NAJAFI; IIP/T/ES  
BDURANT; EUR/PD/TPICKREL  
NAPLES AND MILAN FOR PAO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OIIP](#) [PRC](#)

SUBJECT: PROGRAM EVALUATION FOR U.S. SPEAKERS MAARTEN  
CHRISPEELS AND RAY BRESSEN, TRACKER NUMBERS 17185 AND 17186.

[1](#)1. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY: U.S. SPEAKERS MAARTEN  
CHRISPEELS (UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO) AND RAY  
BRESSAN (PURDUE UNIVERSITY) ADDRESSED AUDIENCES IN NAPLES,  
ROME, AND MILAN OCTOBER 21-24 ON THE BENEFITS OF  
BIOTECHNOLOGY TO AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IN THE  
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MEDITERRANEAN REGION. THE SPEAKERS CARRIED THEIR MESSAGE TO  
A BROAD SEGMENT OF THE ITALIAN PUBLIC, FROM THE ITALIAN  
FARMER'S ASSOCIATION TO UNIVERSITY RESEARCHERS, CONSUMER  
ASSOCIATIONS, ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS (INCLUDING GREENPEACE),  
AND THE PRESS. THE GOAL OF THE PROGRAM WAS TO PROMOTE USG  
BIOTECHNOLOGY POLICY. THE PROGRAM WAS ORGANIZED AND FUNDED  
BY PA ROME IN COLLABORATION WITH PA NAPLES, PA MILAN, THE  
EMBASSY SCIENCE OFFICE, AND THE FOREIGN AGRICULTURAL  
SERVICE.

[1](#)2. DATES: OCTOBER 21-24, 2002; 1ST QUARTER; FY 2003.

[1](#)3. JUSTIFICATION/OBJECTIVE: THE PURPOSE OF THIS PROGRAM WAS  
TO PROMOTE USG BIOTECHNOLOGY POLICY BY ENGAGING IN DIALOGUE  
WITH A BROAD RANGE OF ITALIANS FROM THE SCIENTIFIC,  
AGRICULTURAL, CONSUMER, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SECTORS AND TO  
REINFORCE THE MESSAGE THAT BIOTECH FOOD PRODUCTS ARE SAFE  
FOR THE CONSUMER AND FRIENDLY TO THE ENVIRONMENT.

[1](#)4. MPP UMBRELLA THEMES: MPP GOALS #4 ("PROMOTE MUTUAL  
UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN ITALY AND THE U.S. THROUGH A BROAD  
RANGE OF PERSONAL CONTACTS AND EXCHANGES") AND #6 ("PROMOTE  
IMPROVED ACCESS IN ITALY FOR U.S. GOODS AND SERVICES AND AN  
INCREASE IN EXPORTS TO ITALY OF U.S. PRODUCTS").

[1](#)5. AUDIENCE REACHED: IN NAPLES THE PROGRAM WAS CO-SPONSORED  
BY THE ITALIAN FARMERS' ASSOCIATION AND REACHED ABOUT 100  
ITALIAN FARMERS, RESEARCHERS, UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS,  
ENVIRONMENTALISTS, AND BUSINESSPERSONS INVOLVED IN THE FOOD  
PROCESSING INDUSTRY. IN ROME THE SPEAKERS HELD A ROUND-TABLE  
DISCUSSION WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM CONSUMER ORGANIZATIONS,  
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LABOR UNIONS, AND ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS, AND HELD MEETINGS  
WITH OFFICIALS OF THE U.N. FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL  
ORGANIZATION. IN MILAN, WHERE DR. CHRISPEELS CONTINUED THE  
PROGRAM ALONE, THE SEMINAR ORGANIZED BY PA MILAN AND THE  
DEPARTMENT OF GENETICS AND MICROBIOLOGY OF THE STATE  
UNIVERSITY OF MILAN REACHED AN AUDIENCE OF OVER 100  
UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS, RESEARCHERS, AND STUDENTS, AND A  
LUNCH HOSTED BY THE ITALIAN SOCIETY OF AGRICULTURAL GENETICS  
WAS ATTENDED BY LEADING ITALIAN BIOTECH EXPERTS.

[1](#)6. RESULT/IMPACT: IN NAPLES THE AUDIENCE WAS RESPONSIVE AND  
GENERALLY OPEN-MINDED ABOUT THE POTENTIAL OF BIOTECHNOLOGY  
IN THE ITALIAN CONTEXT. THE PROGRAM CONCLUDED WITH A LIVELY  
DISCUSSION, DURING WHICH VIRTUALLY ALL PARTICIPANTS AGREED  
THAT THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT SHOULD PUSH AHEAD WITH INCREASED  
RESEARCH IN THE BIOTECH FIELD. THE FARMERS' ASSOCIATION  
EXPRESSED STRONG INTEREST IN ORGANIZING A SIMILAR PROGRAM IN  
SOUTHERN ITALY IN 2003. IN ROME THE SPEAKERS MANAGED TO  
CORRECT FALSE IMPRESSIONS ABOUT BIOTECHNOLOGY HELD BY MANY  
CONSUMERS IN ITALY. ONE SIMPLE BUT IMPORTANT POINT THEY MADE  
WAS THAT BIOTECH PRODUCTS ARE CHECKED BY PUBLIC AUTHORITIES  
IN THE U.S. (I.E. THE FDA) AND THOROUGHLY TESTED BEFORE  
BEING PUT ON THE MARKET. THIS CAME AS A SURPRISE TO SOME  
PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS, WHO WERE CONVINCED THAT DECISIONS  
ABOUT COMMERCIALIZATION WERE BASED SOLELY ON RESEARCH  
CONDUCTED BY THE PRODUCERS THEMSELVES. IN MILAN THE PROGRAM  
HIGHLIGHTED THE FACT THAT IN NORTHERN ITALY THE USG CAN NOW  
COUNT ON A SOLID NETWORK OF EXPERTS FULLY SUPPORTIVE OF USG  
BIOTECH POLICY. ITALIAN PARTICIPANTS JOINED IN AN INTENSE  
AND FRUITFUL DISCUSSION WITH PA OFFICERS ON HOW TO COUNTER  
DISINFORMATION ON BIOTECH PRODUCTS AND OFFERED TO ASSIST IN  
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THE FUTURE IN COMMUNICATING INFORMATION ABOUT THE ADVANTAGE  
OF BIOTECH PRODUCTS WITH THE PRESS.

[1](#)7. NON-USG SOURCES OF IN-COUNTRY FUNDING/IN-KIND SUPPORT: CO-  
SPONSORING INSTITUTIONS PROVIDED PROGRAM VENUES AND HOSTED A

LUNCH.

18. QUALITY OF U.S. SPEAKERS OFFICE (IIP) SUPPORT:  
EXCELLENT. POST THANKS PROGRAM OFFICER BARBARA DURANT FOR  
HER EXCELLENT SUPPORT, WHICH MADE THIS PROGRAM POSSIBLE.  
SEMBLER.

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